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Department of State TELEGRAM

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10-22-67 Saigon 9193

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9357
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 4656
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2836
AMCONSUL DANANG 1176

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9193

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJ: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: VOTER TURNOUT AS OF TEN OCLOCK

1. WE HAVE VOTER TURNOUT FIGURES AS OF TEN OCLOCK FOR SAIGON, GIA DINH, ALL OF II CORPS AND ALL OF IV CORPS. IT IS OF COURSE TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WHAT THE FINAL TURNOUT NATIONWIDE WILL BE. ALTHOUGH SAIGON AND GIA DINH APPEAR TO BE RUNNING BEHIND THE SEPT 3 LEVELS, TURNOUT ELSEWHERE APPEARS COMPARABLE TO THAT REGISTERED IN PREVIOUS ELECTIONS BY THIS TIME.

(1)

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2. NATIONWIDE, ROUGHTLY ONE-THIRD OF REGISTERED VOTERS HAD CAST THEIR BALLOTS BY 10 OCLOCK, COMPARED TO ABOUT ONE-QUARTER AT THAT TIME SEPT

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3. THIS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE INTERPRETED TO INDICATE THERE WILL BE A HIGHER VOTER TURNOUT TODAY THAN ON SEPT 3. IT MAY WELL RESULT FROM FACT THAT VOTE-CASTING PROCEDURES ARE CONSIDERABLY LESS COMPLEX IN THIS ELECTION THAN IN THE PRESIDENTIAL AND UPPER HOUSE ELECTIONS, ENABLING IN MOST CONSTITUENCIES VOTERS TO MOVE THROUGH THE POLLS FASTER.

3. IN IV CORPS, WITH ALL PROVINCES REPORTING AS OF 10 OCLOCK, 515,960 PEOPLE HAD VOTED, OR ABOUT 30 PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS. IN SAIGON 163,665, OR ABOUT 88S#PERCENT

HAD VOTED: WHILE IN GIA DINH 121,665 ALSO APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT HAD TURNED OUT. IN II CORPS WITHOUT ALL CONSTITUENCIES REPORTING, 375,202 OR 33 PERCENT HAD VOTED BY 10 OCLOCK. IN I CORPS AND III CORPS NOT ALL PROVINCES HAD REPORTED, BUT TURNOUT RANGED FROM ONLY 17 PERCENT IN QUANG NAM AND 20 PERCENT IN THUA THIEN TO 63 PERCENT IN QUANG TIN. LONG AN HAD REGISTERED 36 PERCENT, PHUOC TUY 44 PERCENT, AND TAY NIGH 32 PERCENT.

4 SPECIAL COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION TUONG TOLD US THIS MORNING THAT ON THE BASIS OF THE ABOVE FIGURES HE PREDICTED A NATIONWIDE TURNOUT OF FROM 70-75 PERCENT, WHILE FOR SAIGON HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE 60-65 PERCENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, TUONG'S DEPUTY ,NGUYEN DINH XUONG, WAS MORE OPTIMISTIC, PREDICTING TURNOUT OF UP TO 80 PERCENT. XUONG ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GVN GET OUT THE VOTE ACTIVITY HAS BEEN MUCH LESS INTENSE THAN PRIOR TO AND DURING THE SEPT 3 ELECTIONS, BUT HE SAID HE THOUGH THE LOCAL CAMPAIGNING WOULD MAKE UP FOR THIS.

4. VIET CONG ANTI-ELECTIONS ACTIVITY HAS BEEN WELL BELOW THAT RECORDED PRIOR TO AND DURING THE SEPT 3 ELECTIONS. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME INCIDENTS, HOWEVER, WHICH CAN BE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE ELECTIONS. IN QUNAG TRI AND PHONG DINH, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT ATTEMPTS ARE BEING MADE TO PREVENT VOTERS FROM REACHING THE POLLS. GRENADES HAVE BEEN THROWN INTO POLLING PLACES TODAY IN PHU BON AND

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QUANG DUC, IN KIEN TUONG. ONE VOTER IS REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED BY A GRENADE. A GRENADE WAS ALSO THROWN INTO A POLLING STATION ON LE VAN DUYET STREET IN SAIGON AT

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SEVEN-THIRTY PM ON OCT 21, CAUSING NO INJURIES. YESTERDAY MORNING THREE YOUNGSTERS AGED 8, 10, AND 15 WERE APPREHENDED NEAR TAN SON NHUT; THEY HAD A GRENADE THEY SAID THEY INTENDED TO DETONATE IN A POLLING STATION.

3. AT FIVE-TWENTY AM TODAY A BUDDHIST NUN IS REPORTED TO HAVE BURNED HERSELF TO DEATH AT THE VINH GIAC PAGODA ON BUI THI XUAN STREET IN SAIGON. WE DO NOT KNOW IF THIS SUICIDE HAD ANY POLITICAL MOTIVATION.
BUNKER

NOTE: # AS RECEIVED.